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ACTION AID-00

INFO LOG-00 NP-00 CIAE-00 INL-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 WHA-00
 SRPP-00 DS-00 EB-00 FAAE-00 FBIE-00 VC-00 TEDE-00
 INR-00 VCE-00 AC-01 NSAE-00 DHS-00 TFBI-00 ACE-00
 DSCC-00 PRM-00 NFAT-00 SAS-00 /001W

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R 051742Z AUG 03
 FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2395
 INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
 AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
 AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
 AMEMBASSY QUITO
 NSC WASHDC
 USCINCSO MIAMI FL

RELEASED IN PART
 B1, 1.4(D)

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 002608

NSC FOR TSHANNON
 USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD
 USAID DCHA/OTI FOR RPORTER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/03/2013
 TAGS: PREL, PINR, KDEM, VE
 SUBJECT: U.S. BECOMES GOV WHIPPING BOY

REF: CARACAS 02520

Classified By: POLITICAL OFFICER TJRELK FOR REASON 1.5 (D)

 Summary

1. (C) Public attacks on U.S. policy by GOV leaders increased in number and intensity from July 20 to the end of the month. Much of the GOV criticism targeted recent State Department comments regarding a possible presidential recall referendum and a July 28 Embassy statement expressing concern for a kidnapped former state governor.

B1

End Summary.

 Referendum Comments Spur Anxiety

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: ALAN H FLANIGAN
 CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)
 DECLASSIFY AFTER: 6 JUN 2026
 DATE/CASE ID: 08 MAR 2007 200503244

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2. (SBU) Comments by Infrastructure Minister Diosdado Cabello and Army Inspector General Gen. Jorge Garcia Carneiro on July 19 and 20, respectively, caused public consternation and fueled speculation that the GOV might impede a recall referendum. Cabello said a recall "is not going to happen" and Cabello said he "rejects (the possibility that) there will be a referendum in 2003." Both comments were directed at legal and practical hurdles to a recall.

3. (SBU) On July 21, the Department criticized Garcia for issuing political opinions from his military post and emphasized that the GOV and the opposition should honor commitments made in a May 29 agreement establishing a process for convoking the recall. Later that day Foreign Minister Roy Chaderton rejected the department's comments, saying it had no authority to comment on the "internal Venezuelan matter." Chaderton added that "some countries are also worried about the U.S. military intervention in the internal affairs of other countries." He said relations with the U.S. were improving, but could be better if they were based "on mutual respect."

Chavez Puts Chavez In Charge of Recall

4. (SBU) The issue died down until July 25, when President Hugo Chavez fired a new salvo, stating that "the government of the U.S. put their foot in their mouth again" by criticizing Garcia. He also declared that it would be "practically impossible" to convoke a presidential referendum. Local media picked up the Department's response to a question July 29 that, according to the Venezuelan Constitution, referendum decisions are made by "the courts, National Electoral Council, and Venezuelan people, rather than with the executive branch of the government." The spokesperson also noted that the May 29 agreement committed the GOV and opposition to a recall framework and "we expect them to honor that commitment."

GOV: Give Us Some R-E-S-P-E-C-T

6. (SBU) Chaderton, Cabello, and Vice President Jose Vicente Rangel also attacked the spokesperson's comments July 29 and 30, arguing the U.S. should stay out of Venezuela's internal politics and respect its sovereignty.

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--Chaderton pleaded for the U.S. to "respect our democracy, value our friendship and partnership and stop their uncontrollable gossiping" and stop giving "lectures on good conduct to the rest of the world." He hoped the U.S. would regain its senses and respect for democracy.

--Cabello described the comment's as "an aggression against us," and as "insulting, intrusive and displaying a lack of respect." He added the U.S. shouldn't concern itself with "what we are doing here in Venezuela ... they have enough of their own internal problems to deal with."

--Rangel said the State Department is "wasting it's time on matters that don't concern them." He said the statements were not reflective of the USG as a whole, but rather the work of

"bellicose sectors at the heart of the State Department which are very reactionary." The Vice President alleged that USG spokespersons were tricking and misleading (using the crude local slang "mamar gallo") their audiences.

Chavez Empire Strikes Back

7. (SBU) Chavez joined the fray during an evening address July 30, adamantly declaring "I don't care what any spokesmen from the State Department say ... this country must be respected." He added that Venezuela is not a colony of the U.S. Other comments:

--The U.S. "has no right to intervene in the affairs of Venezuela ... They should understand that the people deserve respect."

--"We don't care about the power (the U.S.) has or thinks it has to try to attack this land."

--The U.S. "would be better served to occupy itself with its international problems, the problems they generated in the Middle East, Iraq, and those people that are being oppressed."

"Special Treatment" Alleged in U.S. Kidnapping Condemnation

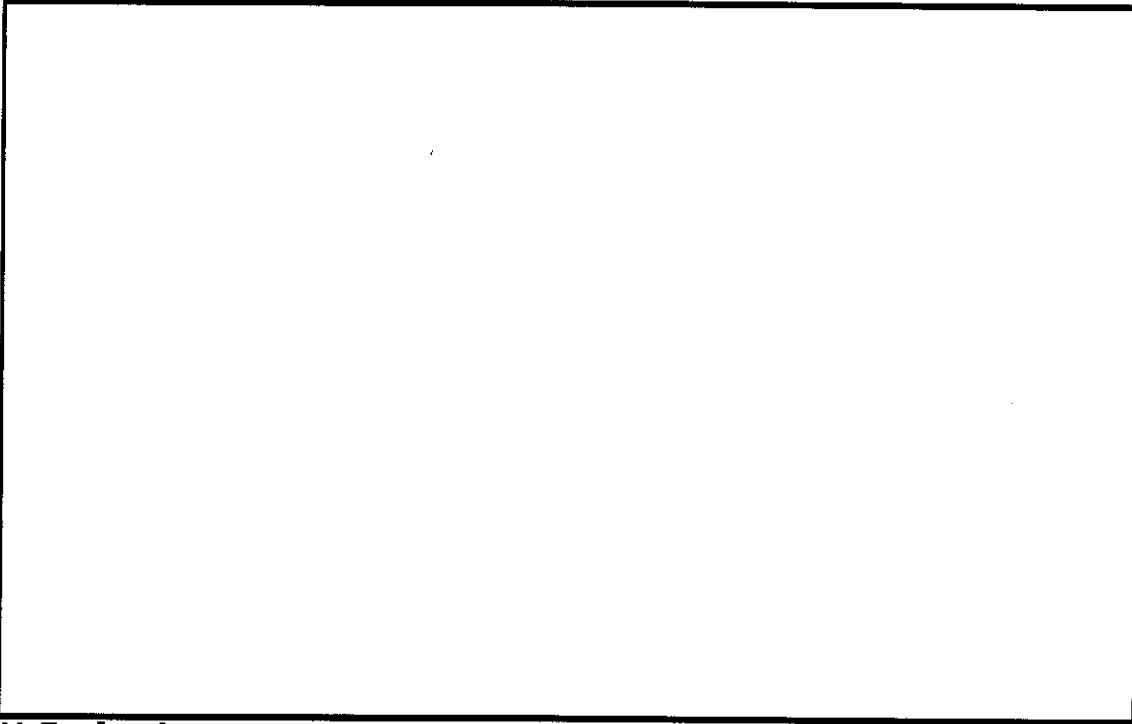
8. (SBU) The GOV challenged the Embassy's July 28 statement July 28 condemning the kidnapping of former Tachira Governor Sergio Omar Calderon. Vice President Rangel charged that the condemnation proved the U.S. was ignoring the murders of 60 pro-GOV farmers and land reform activists by coming to the support of a single pro-opposition politician. "This type of discrimination is unacceptable, it's inhuman," said Rangel. He singled out the Ambassador (knowing he was on leave) to "get informed about the efforts the government is making to

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find Calderon before calling for an investigation." He added that the statement was typical of a "shoot first and ask questions later" U.S. diplomatic doctrine.

Comment



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McFarland

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